HISTORIC SCOTLAND ALBA AOSMHOR

Explore Blackness Castle

Your map and guide

About the castle and shoreline

Thrusting into the Forth on a promontory of basalt, Blackness Castle has long been known as 'the ship that never sailed'. The great 'ness' or nose of black rock that shaped the castle's stone hull also gave it its name.

Blackness has been a medieval stronghold, a garrisoned fortress and a state prison. It is surrounded on three sides by water and once had the added protection of a salt marsh barring the way to the land.

A car park has now bridged that barrier but there are still stretches of salt marsh along the dramatic stretch of coastline that the castle dominates.

Welcome to

Blackness Castle

The natural heritage that thrives around Blackness Castle is legally protected by conservation designations that are reserved for only the most significant sites.

At low tide you can see salt marsh humps that harbour milkwort and sea arrow grass. Looking out further you might spot a green tinge to the mud flats. This is eel grass, so called because its hollow, almost transparent stems resemble young eels.

Wigeon, shelduck and wading birds such as redshank, ringed plover and knot, feed in the great expanse of mudflats when the tide is out. Curlews and oystercatchers fly overhead.

Ragged robin, meadowsweet and several species of orchid flourish in the wettest patches of grassland. Closer to Wester Shore Wood, look out for nesting tree sparrows and yellowhammers in the summer. Buzzards and kestrels hunt over the long grass.

Walking around Blackness

The paths marked on the map will take you between 30 and 45 minutes. Be wary of the mudflats when the tide is out – the mud can be treacherous and the tide can rise very rapidly.

If you follow the path along the sea wall you will find many sea-loving plants. From Blackness, you can explore a network of paths through Wester Shore Wood up to Hopetoun House.

The main path into Blackness Castle includes steps and a kissing gate that might be difficult for some visitors to navigate. Easier access can be gained along St Ninian's Way.

Help us keep this area special

Historic Scotland and the rangers need your help to take care of this magnificent landscape.

- Well-behaved dogs, and responsible dog owners who clean up after them, are always welcome.
- Parking is available in Blackness village and at the castle.
- We recommend you wear sturdy footwear, with good grips, for walking around Blackness.
- Litter can be harmful to wildlife so please leave yours in the bins provided.
- Please do not camp, make fires or barbecue in the grounds of Blackness Castle.
- Golf is not permitted in the grounds of Blackness Castle.
- Please be aware of the water's edge.
- Take care on uneven and slippery surfaces.

Wildlife images
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The Ranger Service

Historic Scotland's Ranger Service delivers a varied programme of events throughout the year.

There are guided walks, conservation work and historically-themed activities aimed at all ages and levels of interest.

Contact us

For more information about the land around Blackness Castle and details of the guided walks and other events, please contact us:

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